

### 5.3.12 Common skate (*Dipturus batis*-complex (blue skate (*Dipturus batis*) and flapper skate (*Dipturus cf. intermedia*)) in subareas 6–7 (excluding Division 7.d) (Celtic Seas and western English Channel)

#### ICES stock advice

ICES advises that when the precautionary approach is applied, there should be zero catches in each of the years 2017 and 2018.

#### Stock development over time

Restrictive management measures over the time period for which there are species-specific landings data mean that reported landings data are not considered indicative of the stock dynamics. There are currently no robust stock size indicators for the common skate complex in this ecoregion.

#### Stock and exploitation status

**Table 5.3.12.1** Common skate complex in subareas 6–7 (excluding Division 7.d). State of the stock and fishery relative to reference points.

		Fishing pressure					Stock size			
		2013	2014	2015			2013	2014	2015	
Maximum sustainable yield	$F_{MSY}$	?	?	?	Undefined	MSY	?	?	?	Undefined
Precautionary approach	$F_{pa}$ , $F_{lim}$	?	?	?	Undefined	$B_{pa}$ , $B_{lim}$	?	?	?	Undefined
Management plan	$F_{MGT}$	-	-	-	Not applicable	$SSB_{MGT}$	-	-	-	Not applicable
Qualitative evaluation	-	✗	✗	✗	Above poss. ref. point	-	✗	✗	✗	Below poss. ref. point

#### Catch options

For this stock, current catches are zero. ICES advises that applying the precautionary approach catches should not increase (ICES, 2012). This corresponds to zero catch in each of the years 2017 and 2018.

**Table 5.3.12.2** Common skate complex in subareas 6–7 (excluding Division 7.d). For stocks in ICES data categories 3–6, one catch option is provided.

Recent advised landings (2015–2016)	0 t	
Discard rate	Unknown	
Precautionary buffer	Not applied	-
Landings advice	0 t	

#### Basis of the advice

**Table 5.3.12.3** Common skate complex in subareas 6–7 (excluding Division 7.d). The basis of the advice.

Advice basis	Precautionary approach.
Management plan	There is no management plan for these stocks.

#### Quality of the assessment

There is no assessment for the Common skate complex.

### Issues relevant for the advice

*Dipturus batis* complex species were traditionally important commercial species in northern European seas, taken in trawl and line fisheries. Whilst there was a larger reduction in the geographical range over the latter half of the 20th century, they remain a bycatch species in trawl and tangle net fisheries on some parts of the continental shelf. The larger-bodied flapper skate *Dipturus cf. intermedia* is known to be proportionally more common in Division 6.a. Whilst the latter species is also caught occasionally further south, the blue skate *Dipturus batis* is the predominant member of the complex in the Celtic Sea.

Current EU regulations prohibit the *Dipturus batis* complex species from being fished, retained on board, trans-shipped, or landed. This is the highest protection possible under the EU's Common Fisheries Policy, a long-term conservation strategy that is similar to a long-term management plan for such species. In 2010, ICES evaluated the inclusion of *Dipturus batis* complex as prohibited species and concluded that this stock should be removed from the list.

Since legal obligations to declare most demersal elasmobranchs to species level were introduced, a greater proportion of data are reported to this level. However, misidentification is common across all members of this genus. Additionally, common skates are listed as prohibited species under EU regulation and species misreporting may occur. For example, landings of long-nosed skate *Dipturus oxyrinchus*, which is not included in fishery regulations, have increased (Table 5.3.12.8). Landings are not informative of stock dynamics, species composition, catch, or landings.

Measures to minimize bycatch may include seasonal and/or area closures or technical measures. For example, if refuges and spawning and nursery grounds are identified, they could be considered for spatial management. Such measures should be developed through stakeholder consultations and as part of a rebuilding plan whilst considering the overall mixed-fisheries context.

Whilst there are currently no robust indicators of stock size, previous analyses of Scottish survey data (ICES, 2010; 2011) indicated some increase in the proportion of hauls in which species *D. batis*-complex were observed. However, catch rates were low and with wide confidence intervals. The Spanish Porcupine Bank survey (SpPGFS-WIBTS-Q4) has seen increasing catch rates of *Dipturus* spp. (ICES, 2016a). This survey may not be representative of the whole stock area. The recent expansion of beam trawl surveys in the Celtic Sea may provide data on juvenile common skate, although these gears will not sample adult common skate effectively.

### Reference points

No reference points are defined for these stocks.

### Basis of the assessment

**Table 5.3.12.4** Common skate complex in subareas 6–7 (excluding Division 7.d). The basis of the assessment.

ICES stock data category	6 ( <a href="#">ICES, 2016b</a> )
Assessment type	No assessment (ICES, 2016c)
Input data	None
Discards and bycatch	Discarding is known to take place but cannot be quantified.
Indicators	None
Other information	Survey (SpPGFS-WIBTS-Q4)
Working group	Working Group on Elasmobranch Fishes ( <a href="#">WGEF</a> )

### Information from stakeholders

Fishers have reported that the smaller of the common skate species (*D. batis*) can be locally frequent in some areas, and this has been confirmed by scientific observations on commercial fishing vessels (Bendall et al., 2012).

## History of advice, catch, and management

**Table 5.3.12.5** Common skate complex in subareas 6–7 (excluding Division 7.d). History of ICES advice\*, reported landings of common skate complex and ICES estimates of combined landings of *Dipturus batis*, *D. cf. intermedia*, *D. oxyrinchus*, and *D. nidarosiensis* (see also Table 5.3.12.8). All weights are in tonnes.

Year	ICES advice	Predicted landings corresp. to advice	Reported landings **	ICES landings ***
2009	No target fishery	0	37	97
2010	No new advice, same as 2009	0	5	35
2011	No target fishery. Retain on Prohibited Species List	0	8	52
2012	No new advice, same as 2011	0	4	42
2013	No target fishery, mitigate bycatch	0	1	45
2014	No target fishery, mitigate bycatch	0	1	175
2015	No target fishery, mitigate bycatch	0	0	388
2016	No target fishery, mitigate bycatch	0		
2017	Precautionary approach	0		
2018	Precautionary approach (same value as advised catches for 2017)	0		

\*There is no a specific TAC for this stock. Fishing opportunities are managed through an overall TAC by management unit, which includes all species of skates and rays.

\*\* Reported landings of common skate complex (*Dipturus batis* and *D. cf. intermedia*)

\*\*\* Data revised in 2016 (ICES, 2016c). These data combine landings for all four members of the genus *Dipturus* occurring in the region, as data are confounded because of species misidentification and misreporting.

## History of catch and landings

The distributions of the various members of this genus in the NEAFC area are uncertain, and catches cannot be quantified.

**Table 5.3.12.6** Common skate complex in subareas 6–7 (excluding Division 7.d). Catch distribution of common skate complex by fleet in 2015 as estimated by ICES.

2015 as estimated by ICES.			
Catches (2015, tonnes)	Landings		Discards
Unknown	otter trawl	other	Discarding is known to take place but cannot be quantified.
	0 tonnes		

\*This percentage may not be representative of all national fleets encountering common skate complex

**Table 5.3.12.7** Common skate complex in subareas 6–7 (excluding Division 7.d). ICES estimates of landings by country (in tonnes). Data revised in 2016 (ICES, 2016c). These data combine reported landings of *Dipturus batis*, *D. cf. intermedia*, *D. oxyrinchus*, and *D. nidarosiensis*.

Country	Belgium	Spain	UK	Ireland	France	Total
2005		24			351	375
2006		6			295	301
2007		11		0	308	319
2008	0	28	96		414	538
2009	0	5	22	2	68	97
2010	0	0	1	4	30	35
2011		1	19	17	15	52
2012		5	12	1	23	42
2013	0	23	1	0	21	45
2014	0	80	63	0	32	175
2015		214	119	21	33	388

**Table 5.3.12.8** Common skate complex in subareas 6–7 (excluding Division 7.d). Reported landings by species (in tonnes). ICES consider that data for all four species are confounded.

Species	<i>D. batis</i> -complex	<i>D. nidarosiensis</i>	<i>D. oxyrinchus</i>	Total
2005	320		56	375
2006	253		48	301
2007	248		70	319
2008	343	52	144	538
2009	37	5	55	97
2010	5	0	30	35
2011	8	0	44	52
2012	4	0	38	42
2013	1		44	45
2014	1		173	175
2015	0		387	388

### Summary of the assessment

There is no assessment for these stocks in this area.

### Sources and references

- Bendall, V. A., Hetherington, S. J., Ellis, J. R., Smith, S. F., Ives, M. J., Gregson, J. and Riley, A. A. (2012). Spurdog, porbeagle and common skate bycatch and discard reduction. Fisheries Science Partnership 2011–2012, Final Report. 88 pp.
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- ICES. 2016c. Report of the Workshop to compile and refine catch and landings of elasmobranchs (WKSHARKS), 19–22 January 2016, Lisbon, Portugal. ICES CM 2016/ACOM:40. 69 pp.